Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1 – 7. (Cancelled).

8. (New) A method for detecting pulmonary aspiration or gastroesophageal reflux comprising: orally administering to a subject a diagnostic composition comprising bio-degradable polymeric microspheres having a diameter of about 0.1-10 microns; obtaining bronchoalveolar lavage; and detecting the presence of said microspheres within alveolar macrophages obtained by said bronchoalveolar lavage.

9. (New) A method according to claim 8 wherein the composition is administered in combination with food.

10. (New) A diagnostic method according to claim 8 for detecting pulmonary aspiration wherein said polymeric microspheres are formed from polymeric materials selected from the group consisting of polyesters, polyphosphate ester, polyphosphazenes, polyorthoesters, polyanhydrides, polycarbonates and polyamides.

11. (New) A diagnostic method according to claim 8 wherein said bio-degradable polymeric microspheres have a diameter of about 1-4 microns.

12. (New) A diagnostic method according to claim 8 wherein said polyesters are selected from the group consisting of homopolymers and copolymers of lactic acid, glycolic acid, mandelic acid, caprolactone, α-hydroxy acids, lactides and glycolides.

13. (New) A diagnostic method according to claim 8 wherein said bio-degradable microspheres are formed of polylactic acid.

14. (New) A food product in combination with a diagnostic composition for detecting pulmonary aspiration said composition comprising bio-degradable polymeric microspheres having a diameter of about 0.1 – 10 microns.

15. (New) The use of bio-degradable polymeric microspheres having a diameter of about 0.1 – 10 microns for the manufacture of a diagnostic composition for detecting pulmonary aspiration.